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Evaluation

Report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2017

Summary

This report summarizes the performance of the UN-Women evaluation function in the areas of corporate and decentralized evaluations and provides an overview of measures undertaken to strengthen the contribution of UN-Women to the United Nations system-wide coordination and national capacity development for gender-responsive evaluation. The report also provides information on the new Global Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021, which outlines the evaluation strategic direction to support the implementation of the UN-Women Strategic Plan. In addition, the report presents the 2018 programme of work and budget for the Independent Evaluation Service (IES[1]).

The Executive Board may wish to: (i) take note of the report on the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2017 and the programme of work and budget for 2018 of the IES; (ii) welcome the steps taken by UN-Women to establish a credible and useful evaluation function and its contribution to system-wide gender-responsive evaluation efforts and national evaluation capacity development; (iii) express continuing support for the strengthening of the Independent Evaluation function in UN-Women; and (iv) request that IES seek out opportunities with other United Nations agencies to conduct a joint evaluation of the Common Chapter of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

[1] UN-Women established the Independent Evaluation and Internal Audit Services on 1 January 2018. Throughout the report, the previous name — Independent Evaluation Office — is used for activities that were undertaken in 2017. The new name — Independent Evaluation Service — is used for planned activities in 2018.

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"We must ensure the Sustainable Development Goals help transform the lives of people around the world. Words must be turned into impactful action. This will not happen without accountability, evaluation and learning." – Amina Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General[2]

I. Transforming women's and girl's lives through evaluation

1. In 2017, the UN-Women Executive Board endorsed UN-Women's new Strategic Plan 2018–2021. To contribute to its successful implementation, the UN-Women's Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) developed its new Global Evaluation Strategy for 2018–2021.

2. The Global Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021 articulates the strategic direction of UN-Women's evaluation function and its objectives to support the Entity's efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls. It outlines how UN-Women will leverage its evaluation function to provide evaluative evidence for greater impact on the lives of the women and girls it serves. The strategy sets out five strategic areas of work: (i) implementing effective corporate evaluation systems; (ii) implementing effective decentralized evaluation systems; (iii) promoting United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation; (iv) strengthening national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation systems; and (v) strengthening evaluation use. Meanwhile, the Corporate Evaluation Plan provides a time-bound framework within which useful evaluation evidence is generated systematically on work performance under the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

3. The Evaluation Strategy emphasizes the following key priorities: (i) improving use of gender-responsive evaluation by UN-Women and its partners for learning and strategic decision-making; (ii) providing timely and relevant evaluative evidence on UN-Women's contribution to development and organizational effectiveness and efficiency results; and (iii) increasing demand for gender-responsive evaluations to support accountability for gender-equality commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and beyond. The strategy identifies innovation, knowledge hub, and forming and sustaining partnerships and networks as key drivers of change for promoting gender-responsive evaluation.

Governance of the evaluation function

Co-location of the independent evaluation and internal audit functions

4. The Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) was established in January 2018. This followed the Executive Board's decision in August 2017 to approve appropriation for the institutional budget, including the budget for the IEAS and their co-location under one oversight service umbrella. A new charter was developed that outlines the mandate, scope of work and roles and responsibilities of the new office.

5. Under one oversight service umbrella, the independent evaluation and internal audit functions shall work together to contribute to providing oversight and assurance of UN-Women's work and organizational learning. While using different work methodologies, both functions share complementarities and can effectively leverage synergies, such as in planning, execution and reporting. Within this architecture, the evaluation function will remain operationally and functionally independent. It will

[2] Executive Leadership Training Programme (2018). UNITAR – Claremont Graduate University. Accessible at http://www.unitar.org/sites/default/files/uploads/elpe_electronic_19.9.17.pdf.

continue to be governed by the UN-Women Evaluation Policy, which is implemented through the Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021 and Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021.

6. The Global Evaluation Advisory Committee (GEAC) continued to serve as a corporate advisory mechanism to the Executive Director and the IEO on the independence and quality of the evaluation function. In 2017, the GEAC met to assess the performance of the evaluation function for the period 2014 to 2017. The Committee appreciated IEO for demonstrating impressive performance in evaluation and recognizing management engagement with the evaluation function, particularly the extensive use of evaluative evidence to inform the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

7. The Committee advised UN-Women management to work closely with IEO and relevant divisions to realize the full potential of the evaluation function to capture stories of change and impact of UN-Women. Considering the co-location of the independent evaluation and internal audit functions, the Committee stressed the need to ensure adequate balance, synchronization and functional integrity of both functions. In congruence with the priorities of the Strategic Plan, the Committee recommended IEO to work in closer partnerships with other entities and find creative ways to encourage learning through evaluation functions; facilitate use of evaluation findings; and continue its leadership in United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) task forces and EvalGender+ for influencing system-wide practice and gender-responsive national evaluation capacity development.

II. Implementing effective corporate evaluations

Implementation of the Corporate Evaluation Plan (2017-2018)

8. At the corporate level, UN-Women IEO ensured coverage of the key result areas of the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2014–2017 by providing a comprehensive assessment of its normative, United Nations system coordination and operational work. This included seven corporate evaluations of the integrated mandate and the Strategic Plan's thematic areas; four meta-analyses of all evaluations managed by UN-Women; and two joint reviews on gender policies and practices in the United Nations system and beyond.

9. In 2017, IEO presented three evaluation reports to the Executive Board: (i) corporate evaluation of UN-Women's regional architecture; (ii) corporate evaluation of UN-Women's strategic partnerships for gender equality and the empowerment of women; and (iii) meta-analysis of evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2016. These reports were accompanied by a management response. As per the 2017–2018 work programme of the Corporate Evaluation Plan, two corporate thematic evaluations have been initiated and will be presented to the Executive Board in 2018 and 2019. However, the evaluation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, which was planned in 2017, has been cancelled to avoid duplication. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations system, as part of its system-wide mandate, has included the UN-SWAP evaluation in its programme of work in 2018 for submission to the General Assembly, as requested in resolution 67/226[3].

10. The implementation status of corporate evaluations for the 2017–2018 period is presented in Table 1.

[3] Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 2012: https://undocs.org/A/RES/67/226.

Table 1
Implementation status of planned corporate evaluations (2017–2018)

	Title of evaluative study	*Additional information*
1.	Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Regional Architecture	Presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session, 2017
2.	Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Strategic Partnerships for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women	Presented to the Executive Board at the annual session, 2017
3.	Meta-analysis of Evaluations Managed by UN--Women in 2016	Presented to the Executive Board at the first regular session, 2017
4.	Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Women's Leadership and Political Participation	To be presented to the Executive Board at the annual session, 2018
5.	Corporate Thematic Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Governance and National Planning, Fully Reflecting Accountability for Gender Equality Commitments and Priorities	To be presented to the Executive Board at the annual session, 2019
6.	Meta-analysis of Evaluations Managed by UN-Women in 2017	To be presented to the Executive Board at the second regular session, 2018
7.	Evaluation of UN-SWAP on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	Cancelled (to be conducted by JIU in 2018)

11. To provide a coherent framework for evaluating the UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021, IES has developed a Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018–2021. The plan includes ten corporate evaluations, co-management of 100 per cent of regional and country portfolio evaluations, technical assistance of up to 12 headquarter-led evaluations, and 100 per cent of country-level evaluations. The plan was approved by the Executive Director and presented to UN-Women's Executive Board in September 2017. Two corporate evaluation topics are still to be decided; implementation is contingent on funding availability. Responding to the Member States request to conduct a joint evaluation of the Common Chapter of Strategic Plan with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, UN-Women will update its Corporate Evaluation Plan in 2018.

12. In 2017, IEO undertook two important activities for improving evaluation approaches and methodologies. The first was commissioning the development of an evaluation approach entitled Inclusive System Evaluation for Gender Equalities, Environments and Marginalized Voices (ISE4GEMs) in collaboration with James Cook University (Australia) and the University of Hull (the United Kingdom). The approach combines innovative systemic evaluation practice with intersectional analysis and is especially relevant in the SDG era for UN-Women and partners. The second was the completion of a feasibility study on how UN-Women can use big data to improve evaluation. It aims to fully understand opportunities that big data methods can provide for improving the quality, credibility and scope of evaluations.

Corporate evaluations as an agent of change

13. UN-Women has continued to use evaluation findings and recommendations of major corporate evaluations to inform changes and improve policies, strategies and programming practices.

Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women Regional Architecture Evaluation

14. The UN-Women Regional Architecture Evaluation, which was completed in 2016 and presented to the Executive Board (UNW/2017/CPR. 2) in 2017, helped UN-Women to review organizational design and inform ongoing change-management processes. The evaluation led to the enhancement of the programme management and strategic planning functions through reconfiguration of the role of the Regional Programme Management Team. In addition, UN-Women initiated a process to update the functional analysis of headquarters (HQ) functions to improve synergies and analytical and programmatic support to the field, and to respond to growing demand in disaster risk management, humanitarian response and resilience. The Internal Control Framework and Delegation of Authority was also updated to reflect these shifts, with a greater emphasis on decentralization and empowerment of the field.

15. In response to the evaluation, UN-Women has developed an internal tool, which sets out objectives to help inform considerations for UN-Women's country presence typology. As part of efficiency measures, the evaluation led to the conversion from a multi-country to country-office model in Europe and Central Asia. Similar changes are underway or under review for other multi-country offices. The exception is the multi-country office model in the Caribbean and the Pacific, where small-island geography makes it more applicable, as per evaluation recommendations.

16. Finally, the evaluation noted a significant gap in knowledge management that undermines the capacity of the organization to be joined up and present itself as a credible authority on gender equality with partners at country and regional levels. UN-Women responded by establishing an internal knowledge management group led by the Directors of Policy and Programme as well as the development of a new knowledge management strategy.

17. These changes reflect the overall effort by UN-Women, in line with the evaluation, to clarify roles, and improve efficiency and effectiveness, as it implements Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

18. As of December 2017, out of the eight actions formulated to respond to the eight recommendations contained in the evaluation, three (38 per cent) have been completed, and five (62 per cent) are ongoing and expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

Corporate Evaluation of UN-Women's contribution to United Nations system coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment

19. The response of UN-Women to the Corporate Evaluation of the contribution of UN-Women to United Nations system coordination on gender equality and the empowerment of women, which was presented to the Executive Board in 2016 (UNW/2016/CRP.7), has been similarly positive. The evaluation created an opportunity to deepen the understanding and implementation of the entity's coordination mandate. In response to one of the evaluation's main recommendations, UN-Women has updated its theory of change and coordination strategy on the implementation of its coordination mandate. The process involved broad participation by divisions across the entity. This fostered greater ownership and investment in, as well as visibility and recognition of, this crucial portfolio of the entity's work. In

response to the evaluation, staff involved in coordination functions and mechanisms throughout the entity were able to clarify and strengthen their role.

20. Furthermore, the new Strategic Plan 2018–2021 clarifies how the composite mandate of UN-Women is indivisible and will be leveraged in a fully integrated fashion, including through the Strategic Plan. In this context, the upgrade of the Results Management System to better capture results of coordination functions has resulted in the development of a project module that will gradually capture joint programmes implemented on the ground.

21. As of December 2017, out of the 31 actions formulated to respond to the eight recommendations contained in the evaluation, 26 (84 per cent) have been completed and five (16 per cent) are ongoing and expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

III. Performance of the evaluation function in UN-Women

22. The global evaluation oversight system (GEOS) provided periodic information to managers at different levels to propel and sustain progress on the performance of the evaluation function. All nine key performance indicators tracked under the GEOS dashboard have made commendable gains since 2014.

Table 1
Trends in key performance indicators (2014–2017)

Key performance indicator	*Description*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*Target (by 2017)*
Financial resources invested in evaluation function	Evaluation expenditure over UN-Women programme expenditure	2.2	2.0	2.9[a]	2.7	3.0
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation	Offices that appointed a monitoring and evaluation focal point or officer	98.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Evaluation coverage	Offices that conducted at least one evaluation since 2011	68.0	71.0	84.0	89.0	100.0
Evaluation implementation rate	Percentage of evaluations being implemented	71.0	76.0	84.0	84.0	95.0
Quality of evaluations	Percentage of evaluations rated "satisfactory and above"	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Evaluation reports posted on GATE	Percentage of completed evaluation reports posted on GATE	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Management response submission to GATE	Percentage of completed evaluation reports submitted with management response to GATE	86.0	86.0	94.0	100.0	100.0
Implementation of management response	Percentage of management response key actions being implemented	83.0	85.0	94.0	86.0	90.0
Use of evaluations	Percentage of offices that reported using evaluation	71.0	75.0	–[b]	86.0	90.0

[a] The figures for 2016 and 2017 are calculated using the new methodology; therefore it is not comparable to previous years.

[b] Due to glitches in the corporate Results Management Systems, data on evaluation use for 2016 was not captured in the annual reporting by offices.

23. Taken together, four out of the nine key performance indicators achieved targets, and five made considerable progress towards meeting the established targets. The level of evaluation reports rated "satisfactory" and "above" have stabilized at 100 per cent. One hundred per cent of completed evaluations were made publicly available through the Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use system (GATE). Since 2014, IEO has received 100 per cent of management responses for corporate evaluations and an average of 92 per cent of management responses for decentralized evaluations. Implementation of agreed actions for evaluations completed in 2017 reached 86 per cent.

24. Implementation of planned evaluations reached 84 per cent. This constitutes a 13 percentage point increase, from 71 per cent in 2014. The number of offices with at least one evaluation reached 89 per cent in 2017, up 22 percentage points compared to 2014. This still falls short of the evaluation policy, which requires at least one evaluation to be commissioned during each cycle. Reporting on use of evaluative evidence increased to 86 per cent in 2017, from 71 per cent in 2014.

25. Overall, progress is attributable to the consolidation of oversight and quality assurance systems, roll-out of various evaluation guidance, and tools and strong capacity development initiatives. More importantly, oversight and quality assurance support provided by regional evaluation specialists has had a direct impact on the quality and increased evaluation culture at the decentralized level. Active collaboration among IEO, Programme Division and Regional Offices also has resulted in increased attention to evaluation by managers.

26. While all indicators have improved, performance patterns among regions are diverse, and more needs to be done for the continued progression and advancement of the function. Region-specific efforts and continued investments are required to build capacities at every level and to drive progress of all key performance indicators within the framework of the new Global Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021.

Key performance indicator 1: financial resources

Table 2
Evaluation function expenditure (2013–2016)

(United States dollars)

	2013	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Total UN-Women expenditure	269 660 584	270 537 900	315 101 084	254 413 520	249 447 953
Total expenditure on evaluation	3 576 396	5 917 163	6 272 545	7 391 573	6 714 506
IEO	2 123 750	4 499 942	4 621 818	5 377 637	4 208 814
Decentralized evaluations[6]	1 226 729	1 417 221	1 650 727	2 013 936	2 505 691
Total evaluation expenditure (percentage)	**1.3**	**2.2**	**2.0**	**2.9**	**2.7**[7]

Source: "Total UN-Women expenditure" and "IEO expenditure" figures were generated from ATLAS by the Division of Management and Administration (DMA). Figures for decentralized evaluations were calculated based on official figures by DMA and supplemented by data obtained from field offices.

[6] Estimated costs for decentralized evaluations included a broad range of categories, such as conduct of evaluation, capacity development on evaluation, M&E staff cost, and communication and dissemination of evaluation products.

[7] The figures for 2016 and 2017 are calculated using new methodology; therefore it is not comparable to previous years.

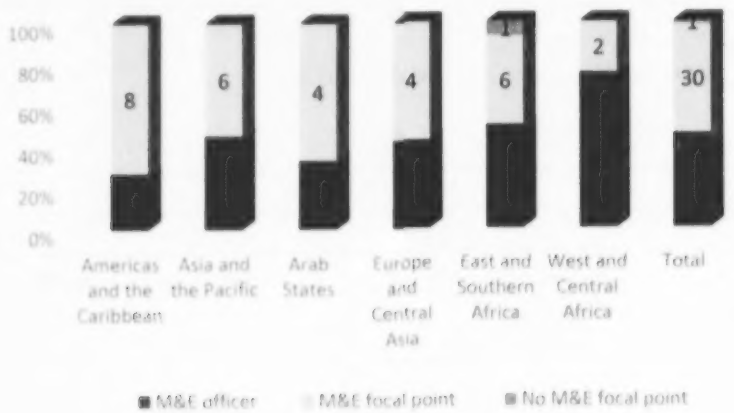
27. Total spending on evaluation in 2017 was $6.7 million (2016: $7.4 million), representing 2.7 per cent (2016: 2.9 per cent) of the UN-Women "programme expenditure". Of this, 63 per cent (2016: 73 per cent) comprised the expenditure of the IEO and 37 per cent (2016: 27 per cent) expenditure related to decentralized evaluations. The IEO expenditure includes salary of six regional evaluation specialists, who are part of the IEO but deployed in regional offices to support the decentralized evaluation function. The decrease in total spending on evaluation of 10 per cent in 2017 was largely due to a reduction in cost sharing resources.

Key performance indicator 2: human resources

28. The work of the UN-Women IEO in 2017 was supported by ten headquarter staff members and six evaluation specialists based in each regional office. The positions of Director for the newly-established IEAS and Chief for the IES have been advertised, with recruitment to be finalized in 2018.

29. There are diverse institutional arrangements for staffing at the field level. In 2017, 26 country and regional offices (46 per cent) reported having at least one monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer. The remaining offices had appointed an M&E focal point. Due to limited capacity, one office in East and Southern Africa is directly supported by Regional Office. The availability of M&E officers was highest in the West and Central and the East and Southern Africa regions. Emerging demand for country portfolio evaluations and the need to facilitate learning from evaluations, requires continuous capacity development interventions at the decentralized level.

Figure 1
Human resources for monitoring and evaluation officers/focal points by region



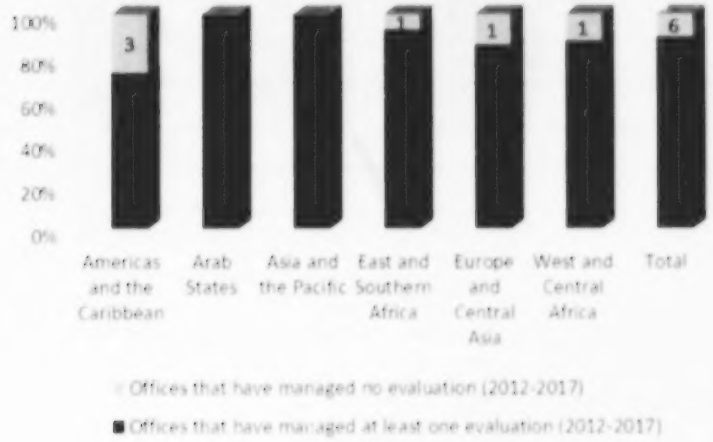
Source: Global evaluation oversight system.
Abbreviation: M&E, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Key performance indicator 3: coverage of evaluations

30. Coverage of evaluation has steadily improved over time. During the period 2012-2017, 89 per cent of country offices had carried out at least one evaluation. Nonetheless, this key performance indicator struggled to achieve full compliance as per the Evaluation Policy, which requires all offices to commission at least one evaluation during the strategic note cycle. Most prominently, Asia and Pacific and Arab States regions have achieved 100 per cent coverage. With the exception of the Americas and the Caribbean region, the regions of Europe and Central Asia, East and

Southern Africa, and West and Central Africa regions are all edging closer to full compliance. Reasons for non-compliance are associated with complex contexts and limited resources.

Figure 2
Evaluation coverage by region (2012–2017)



Source: Global evaluation oversight system.

31. IEO's efforts to promote strategic evaluations have resulted in an increased number of country portfolio evaluations (CPEs). The coverage of CPE has reached 27 per cent since its roll-out in 2015. In 2017 alone, nine CPEs were completed, compared to two in 2016. This shift suggests that country offices are emphasizing strategic evaluations, which has proved vital for generating useful evidence for development of new strategic notes. The approach allows greater coverage of UN-Women portfolios at the country level.

32. The conduct of CPEs, however, is variable across regions. The highest proportion of CPEs was conducted in East and Southern Africa, Europe and Central Asia, and West and Central Africa. The Asia and Pacific region conducted no CPEs so far. These variations might be explained by several factors related to budget allocation, capacity of offices and timeframe of strategic note cycles.

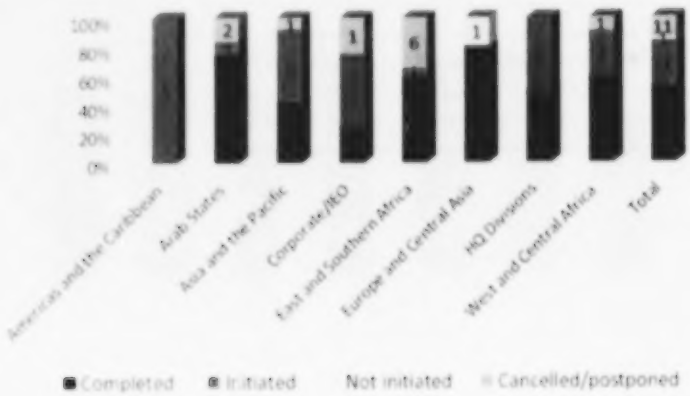
Key performance indicator 4: implementation rate of planned evaluations

33. Out of 72 evaluations planned in 2017, 84 per cent were being implemented (53 per cent completed and 31 per cent in progress). However, 15 per cent of the evaluations were either postponed or cancelled. Reasons for evaluation deferments are largely associated with the extension of strategic notes and programme agreements with donors (70 per cent); consultant capacity issues (10 per cent); and complex country contexts (10 per cent). A few evaluations were superseded by regional thematic and other evaluations (10 per cent).

34. In regional terms, the highest proportion of evaluations was completed in East and Southern Africa (29 per cent) and Arab States (26 per cent). These were followed by West and Central Africa (18 per cent), Asia and the Pacific (15 per cent), and Europe and Central Asia (12 per cent). No evaluation was completed in the Americas and Caribbean region. While progress is notable over the years, some challenges in evaluation planning need to be addressed, including more strategic and realistic

selection of evaluations, and increased capacity and accountability to manage and complete planned evaluations on time.

Figure 3
Evaluation implementation rate (2017)

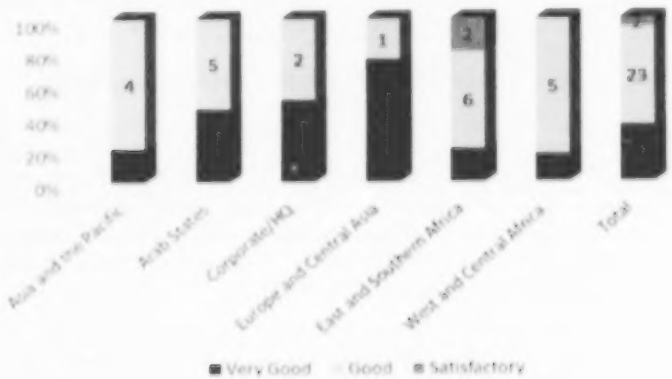


Source: Global evaluation oversight system.

Key performance indicator 5: quality of evaluation reports

35. UN-Women IEO commissioned an external meta-evaluation of all UN-Women-managed evaluations in 2017. The assessment shows a multi-dimensional improvement in the quality of evaluations. Results of the assessment show that out of 38 evaluation reports, 13 (34 per cent) were rated as very good, 23 (61 per cent) good, and two (5 per cent) satisfactory. No report has been rated as unsatisfactory. This represents 95 per cent of evaluations meeting and exceeding the established quality standards. Europe and Central Asia had the highest proportion of very good evaluations. Assessments of the quality of the evaluations is one way of determining adherence to required standards.

Figure 4
Quality of evaluations (2017)



Source: Global Evaluation Assessment and Analysis System.

Key performance indicator 6: submission rate of completed evaluation reports to GATE

36. IEO maintained an online repository of evaluations. Similar to the pattern observed in previous years, 100 per cent of completed evaluations were made publicly available through the system.

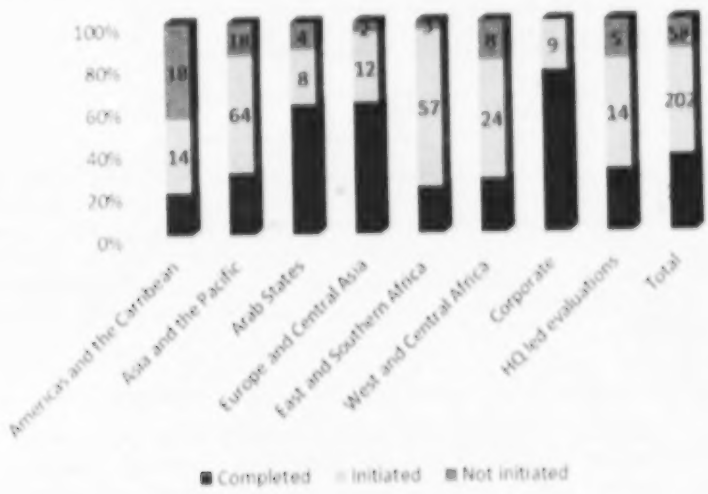
Key performance indicator 7: management response submissions to GATE

37. In 2017, 100 per cent of completed evaluations included a management response, as required by the evaluation policy—a substantial improvement from preceding years. Management responses enable UN-Women to respond to evaluation findings and reflect on how to address recommendations for improvement.

Key performance indicator 8: Implementation of management response/key actions, 2017

38. The 36 completed evaluations in 2016 committed UN-Women to undertake 411 management response actions. As of February 2017, 86 per cent of actions were either completed or in progress/ongoing (36 per cent completed and 50 per cent in progress/ongoing). Fourteen per cent of agreed actions are yet to be initiated; 7 per cent are overdue. These data reflect management commitment to organizational learning. Nevertheless, IEO has faced challenges in receiving management responses and implementing commitments to evaluation recommendations in a timely manner. Closer partnership with Programme Division and Regional Offices, and seamless integration of GATE with the Corporate Results Management System, are expected to address this challenge.

Figure 5
Implementation of evaluation management response actions



Source: Global Evaluation Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use

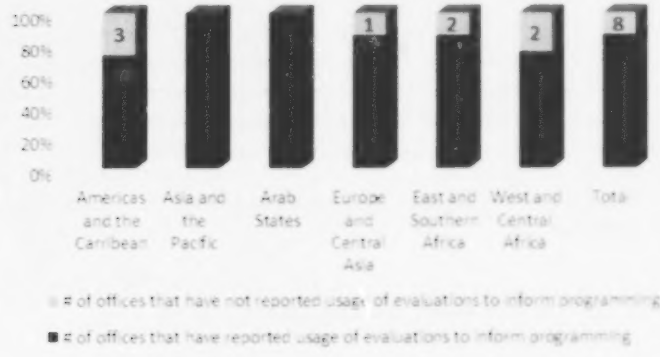
Key performance indicator 9: use of evaluation

39. There has been a steady increase in UN-Women's commitment to using evaluation to increase accountability, informed decision-making and learning. Annual

reports from offices demonstrated that there was incremental management uptake of lessons and insights from evaluations. In 2017, 86 per cent of field offices reported use of evaluations. In several areas, lessons learned have catalysed decisions to develop new strategic notes and partnership agreements. In addition, insights and lessons from evaluations were used for ensuring greater focus and deepening programme presence; strengthening staff capacity on results-based management and related issues; bridging information gaps on emerging and expanding areas of UN-Women's humanitarian work; and strengthening existing coalitions and networks.

40. Further improvement is expected in the context of the new Global Evaluation Strategy 2018–2021, which elevated the facilitation of evaluation use as one of the key pillars of work for the evaluation function.

Figure 6
Use of evaluations (2017)



Source: Results Management System.

IV. Decentralized evaluation system

41. Over the course of the previous Strategic Plan (2014-2017), significant measures have been put in place to enhance the credibility, impartiality and quality of the decentralized evaluation function. Oversight, capacity development and quality assurance systems have been consolidated and become an integral part of corporate- and field-level strategies and programming. This has resulted in considerable progress on a suite of evaluation key performance indicators, including increased organizational learning.

Quality assurance and technical support to decentralized evaluations

42. The IEO promoted collaboration across various parts of the organization for improving learning and accountability through an effective evaluation function. In 2017, IEO co-managed nine country portfolio evaluations, managed four regional evaluations and provided technical and quality assurance support to 21 decentralized evaluations. IEO also provided systematic technical support to three HQ-led evaluations.

Systems to improve the quality, credibility and use of decentralized evaluations

43. To sustain progress achieved in previous years, IEO used the global evaluation oversight system (GEOS) to periodically track and inform managers about the progress of the evaluation key performance indicators. GATE continued to serve as an online repository of evaluation reports and a vital tool for tracking progress of management responses to evaluation recommendations across UN-Women. In 2017, the system was strengthened with new functionalities to increase its ease of use.

44. The global evaluation report assessment and analysis system (GERAAS) provided an external independent assessment of all corporate and decentralized evaluation reports. All 38 evaluations completed in 2017 were quality assessed. Feedback was provided to the respective offices and a meta-evaluation report was produced. Offices with very good evaluations were acknowledged, and reports were promoted and disseminated organization-wide. IEO also maintained a consultant database that allows identification of consultants with gender and evaluation expertise.

45. In 2017, IEO developed a global evaluation plan that brought together all corporate and decentralized evaluations. The plan fostered coherence and synergies, while generating information to improve organizational effectiveness. It is now an integral part of UN-Women's efforts to support strategic planning of evaluative activities, while reinforcing timelines and adequate thematic and geographic coverage of evaluations across UN-Women's operations.

Internal evaluation capacity development and professionalization programme on evaluation

46. Recognizing the existing needs and phased approach required to build internal capacities, a variety of methods were undertaken by the IEO through evaluation trainings, guidance material and continuous technical support to the decentralized evaluation function.

47. The professionalization initiative to strengthen the evaluation function has continued to attract both UN-Women staff and external stakeholders to participate in the eLearning course How to Manage Gender-Responsive Evaluation. Sixty-three per cent of UN-Women offices have at least one M&E focal point that has received certification of completion, representing an 8 per cent improvement from last year. The eLearning course is publicly accessible and has enrolled 2,078 individuals, an increase of almost 900 individuals since 2016. Eighty-five per cent of individuals that completed the course reported that they felt they would be able to integrate a gender perspective into their work. The professionalization initiative also included working with human resources to reflect gender responsive evaluation competencies and responsibilities in relevant job profiles of the newly launched job dictionary.

48. Further in 2017, IEO delivered learning events through its regional evaluation specialists that reached hundreds of UN-Women staff. At the decentralized level, direct coaching and technical assistance were provided, including review of evaluation terms of reference, reports, and monitoring and evaluation plans; evaluability of strategic notes; and facilitating use of evaluation evidence. Due to the frequent change of M&E focal points, specific and continuous capacity development interventions are needed. This requires additional efforts and resources from UN-Women.

49. IEO also continued to be represented in regional- and headquarter-led peer review sessions for new strategic notes. This platform remained valuable to ensure preparation of costed evaluation plans, evaluability of programmes and systematic integration of lessons into new programming.

V. Communication to facilitate use of evaluation

Implementation of the communication strategy

50. Knowledge management and communications remained a key focus of IEO's activity in 2017. IEO has developed and implemented a Communications and Evaluation Use Strategy and has calibrated its outreach to relevant audiences via different communications channels. It produced a minimum communications package for each corporate evaluation, which includes an evaluation report, brief, magazine, announcements, webinars, Executive Board presentation and social media.

51. IEO continued to produce Transform, the magazine for gender-responsive evaluation. Online reader-engagement data show that Transform is accessed an average of over 2,000 times per issue annually, far exceeding the access data for the evaluation reports themselves (400 times). In 2017, three Transform issues were produced: (i) UN-Women's Regional Architecture; (ii) UN-Women's Strategic Partnerships; and (iii) the fourth meta-analysis of decentralized evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2016.

Innovative communication and knowledge management

52. To transform IEO into a "knowledge hub" for gender-responsive evaluation, knowledge management systems and other communication activities were further developed and used in 2017. GATE was upgraded to provide timely support to staff across UN-Women. In line with its growing online presence, IEO revamped its intranet and website with an improved search function. In 2017, website returning visitors' rates reached 67.2 per cent, compared with 46.5 per cent in 2015, demonstrating increased audience engagement with the evaluation website content.

53. IEO has leveraged participation in conferences and webinars to engage a broad external audience through live social media coverage. Social media messages were often picked up by broad accounts, such as the UN-Women HQ account, expanding reach beyond IEO's typical audience. The gender-equality evaluation portal website continued to be a key resource, regarding what works and what does not work for gender equality.

54. Similarly, regions pursued a systematic approach to better harness and make accessible evaluative evidence. For instance, the Regional Office for Arab States has made advances in establishing a regional evaluation SharePoint page to consolidate evaluation resources and increase evaluation use. The Asia and Pacific regional office produced a comprehensive meta-analysis report, capturing insights from evaluation reports. In addition, a series of knowledge products, region-specific meta-briefs and videos were produced by Americas and the Caribbean, East and Southern Africa, Europe and Central Asia, and West and Central Africa regions.

55. IEO partnered with the UN Coordination Division to support the UN-Women SDG Knowledge Management Advocacy project. The project aims to catalyse all knowledge on the SDGs through two components: (i) a platform where evaluation will have a dedicated tab to feature IEO's resources and products about gender-responsive evaluation and the SDGs and (ii) a Community of Practice that will send monthly updates to members, featuring news and resources on the SDGs from various parts of UN-Women, both HQ and field.

VI. United Nations system-wide coordination of gender-responsive evaluation

56. In 2017, UN-Women provided its support to system-wide coordination on gender responsive evaluation by: (i) engaging with UNEG; (ii) tracking progress on the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator; and (iii) participating in and coordinating inter-agency networks and regional evaluation groups.

A. United Nations Evaluation Group and regional United Nations evaluation groups

57. UN-Women sustained its role in UNEG by promoting the integration of gender equality and human rights dimensions into evaluation and contributing to UNEG's strategic objectives through participation in working groups. In 2017, IEO co-convened the UNEG professional peer reviews of the evaluation function of UN organizations and the Human Rights and Gender Equality Working Groups and advanced the integration of gender dimensions into the evaluation systems. During the 2017 UNEG Annual General Meeting and Evaluation Practice Exchange, IEO played a leading role in organizing the meeting and ensuring integration of gender perspective across several deliberations and workshops. IEO also has collaborated with UNEG and has been involved in the discussions on "system-wide evaluation in support of UN reform towards collective accountability and learning."

B. United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

58. In 2017, IEO provided support to UN entities by co-leading the UNEG Task Force for Gender Equality and Human Rights. Under UN-Women leadership, the task force produced: (i) a synthesis narrative of the reporting trends across UN entities; (ii) a revised technical note on the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator aligned with the next generation of UN-SWAP 2.0; and (iii) guidance on evaluating corporate gender mainstreaming. Given that the UN-SWAP 2.0 framework requires reporting on gender mainstreaming and gender equality results, this guidance will serve as a resource for UN entities wishing to undertake an evaluation of gender mainstreaming at institutional and programmatic levels.

59. Entities reporting against the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator (UN-SWAP EPI) have made good progress on integrating gender equality in evaluation. Overall scores have increased, and more entities sought external perspectives on their assessment. Of the 42 entities that reported the evaluation indicator was applicable in 2017, 26 per cent reported that they were "exceeding requirements," 50 per cent reported "meeting requirements," and 24 per cent reported "approaching requirements." Almost three-quarters of scorecard users (N=24/33) have reached this benchmark for gender responsive evaluation. For the first time, no entity has reported missing requirements.

60. The 2017 meta-evaluation of UN-Women-managed evaluations found a significant increase in performance of UN-SWAP EPI—the highest recorded performance for UN-Women since tracking of this indicator began (10.4 out of a maximum score of 12). This means that UN-Women has met the agreed deadline for reaching UN-SWAP EPI standards. The shift towards more strategic evaluations, consistent quality assurance support by regional evaluation specialists, rigorous consultant recruitment vetting, and continued capacity development initiatives contributed to the positive change.

61. To exceed the UN-SWAP EPI, however, enhancements are still needed in the methods, and prioritisation of recommendations. Systematically tackling these gaps and sustaining momentum can ensure that future evaluations will exceed the new standards of the UN-SWAP 2.0.

C. Supporting joint evaluations and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework

62. Through its regional evaluation specialists, IEO continued to be an active member in regional UN evaluation networks and platforms to promote gender-responsive evaluation.

63. In order to support greater UN system-wide coherence, UN-Women supported the integration of gender equality across UN interagency evaluation work, including in joint programmes and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluations. Within the framework of regional evaluation groups, UN-Women provided technical and advisory support to 12 UNDAF evaluations and helped manage four joint evaluations.

VII. Leveraging partnership for National Evaluation Capacity Development and Evaluation for SDGs

A. Enhancing gender responsive evaluation capacities in the framework of the SDGs

64. UN-Women continued its work in supporting gender-responsive evaluations in the context of the SDGs. Continuous efforts in improving national evaluation capacities were advanced through training, knowledge generation and exchange.

65. During 2017, UN-Women continued supporting national and regional gender-responsive evaluation capacities. Specifically, it co-leads EvalGender+, a global multi-stakeholder partnership aimed at building knowledge and capacities on gender-responsive evaluation within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. As part of its drive to reach out to a critical mass of evaluators, EvalGender+ expanded its community of practice. In 2017, membership grew to 3,123. The network served as a key platform to share good practices and lessons learned on topics related to gender and evaluation.

66. At the fifth National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) Conference organized by UNDP and other partners in Istanbul, IEO served as a speaker for a session on "Leaving no one behind: from global commitments to national experiences to set up a framework to evaluate SDGs." It also organized a pre-conference training on "Evaluating the SDGs through equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluations." Both sessions were successful in providing guidance on integrating a gender-equality approach to national evaluation systems and promoting the use of gender-responsive evaluations to inform the national reviews of SDGs.

67. UN-Women delivered training on "Evaluating the SDGs through an equity-focused and gender-responsive lens" at the 2017 African Evaluation Association conference, which drew 687 participants from 71 countries. The strand on Gender Equality and Equity Focused Evaluation observed the second highest number of accepted papers, panels, posters and workshops during the conference. Similarly, at the sixth Middle East and North Africa Evaluators Network conference, UN-Women contributed to supporting cross-regional knowledge exchange on gender-responsive evaluation in the framework of the SDGs.

68. To advance global and local action on gender-responsive evaluation and to evaluate the SDGs with a gender lens, UN-Women leveraged and played a key role during the third Global Evaluation Forum in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and the International Development Evaluation Association and the Latin-American and Caribbean Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization Network conference in Mexico. In West Africa, UN-Women supported the creation of the Association Sénégalaise d'Évaluation's working group on equity and gender- responsive evaluation. It also delivered a series of workshops to respond to the increasing demand for gender-responsive evaluation capacities.

69. These conferences and training sessions brought together over a thousand participants, representing Governments, Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators, researchers and academics, evaluation commissioners and practitioners to share evaluation approaches and experiences.

Supporting gender responsive national M&E systems in selected countries

70. Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and under a partnership umbrella, UN-Women provided targeted technical advice and capacity development on gender-responsive evaluation to support accountability in meeting gender-equality commitments for the implementation of the SDGs.

71. During 2017, UN-Women IEO followed a twin-track approach of monitoring and evaluation support and partnership building with national governments and international agencies in Latin America, Arab States, and the Africa region. IEO supported the design and implementation of the evaluation of the national gender policy in Costa Rica; the evaluation of the National Gender Plan with the Ministry of Women in the Dominican Republic; and the development of a system of gender indicators with the Government of the City of Buenos Aires.

72. In the Arab States region, UN-Women commissioned case studies on national evaluation policies and systems in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. By documenting what exists and identifying key levers for establishing a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation system, they provide a foundation for future work on national evaluation capacity. This was made possible with expanded collaboration and partnerships with other UN Agencies and regional bodies, including the Interagency Evaluation Network for Arab States and the regional inter-agency Peer Support Group. Consultations with stakeholders at the national level have enhanced national ownership of current and future potential work. The UN-Women office in Zimbabwe supported the government's development of gender-responsive National Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines that will operationalize the National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy.

73. In 2017, the Guidance on Evaluating the SDGs with a "No One Left Behind" lens was translated into four languages (Arabic, French, Russian and Spanish).

VIII. The 2018 Independent Evaluation Service programme of work

74. 2018 will be the first year of implementing IES's newly developed Evaluation Strategy 2018-2021, along with its Corporate Evaluation Plan 2018-2021. The five-key result areas below outline IES's programme of work with a focus on the UN reform and contribution to SDGs.

A. Implementation of effective corporate evaluations

75. In 2018, IES will present to the Executive Board the findings of two corporate evaluations on: (i) Women's Leadership and Political Participation and (ii) a meta-analysis of corporate and decentralized evaluations managed by UN-Women in 2017. IES will conduct an evaluation on Governance and National Planning that will be presented to the Executive Board in 2019. It will also initiate a corporate evaluation on UN-Women's contribution to humanitarian response and a review of UN-Women's Evaluation Policy. To determine the extent to which progress towards the objectives of UN-Women's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 can be readily and reliably measured, IES will conduct an evaluability assessment of UN-Women's current Strategic Plan. Additionally, IES will continue to explore and develop innovative and gender-responsive evaluation methodologies. It will also collaborate with UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF and other UN agencies on the joint evaluation of the common chapter of the Strategic Plan 2018–2021.

B. Implementation of effective decentralized evaluation systems

76. IES will further strengthen its decentralized systems and practices by managing regional and country portfolio evaluations and implementing the professionalization programme. Mentorship will be emphasized to evaluation managers. In addition, IES will update its regional evaluation strategies and continue oversight and technical support of decentralized evaluations quality assurance mechanisms. These include the global evaluation oversight system, the global evaluation reports assessment and analysis system, and the roster of gender-responsive evaluators.

C. Promotion of United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation

77. IES will continue to provide leadership and actively participate in UNEG and regional United Nations evaluation groups. IES also will take part in UNEG taskforces to ensure mainstreaming of gender equality across inter-agency evaluation work. This includes helping United Nations entities on the evaluation performance indicator of the UN-SWAP through technical guidance, training and facilitating exchange among United Nations entities. Regarding the repositioning of the United Nations development system, IES will engage with UNEG to better support the envisioned system-wide evaluation mechanism proposed by the Secretary-General.

D. Strengthening national evaluation capacities for gender-responsive evaluation systems

78. IES will continue engaging in partnerships to leverage support to increase gender-responsive evaluation for SDGs. IES will support national, gender-responsive evaluation capacity development and strategically use its role as co-chair of EvalGender+ to advocate for gender-responsive national evaluation systems. Furthermore, IES will offer technical assistance at regional and national levels on conducting of gender-responsive evaluations.

E. Strengthening gender-responsive evaluation use

79. With "use of evaluation" as a new, separate key result area, IES will deepen its engagement with key internal and external stakeholders on the focus, timing and

follow-up to evaluations to enable greater ownership of recommendations and absorption of lessons. IES will invest in substantive knowledge-sharing through knowledge and learning partnerships, including the launch of a new guidance series to support learning needs.

F. Approved budget for the 2018 Independent Evaluation Service programme of work

80. The total IES budget for 2018 is $3,980,078. The budget is comprised of two funding categories: institutional budget and core programmable.

81. The institutional budget of $2,817,937 covers the salaries of 11 staff, including a Director position and two support staff of the new Independent Evaluation and Audit Services. Also covered are key activities of the work plan: company contracts for evaluation studies in 2018; office operational costs; support to decentralized evaluation systems; support to United Nations coordination on gender-responsive evaluation; and national evaluation capacity development on gender-responsive evaluation. In addition to the institutional budget, the salaries of five regional evaluation specialists are covered through core resources of $1,162,141.

Annex I

Evaluations completed in 2017

Region	Office/division	Title of evaluation	Quality rating
West and Central Africa	Cameroon	Mainstreaming Gender into Humanitarian Response	Good
	Cameroon	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
	Cote d'Ivoire	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
	Cote d'Ivoire	Anticipating and Preventing Women and Young Girls' Vulnerability to Terrorism through Their Empowerment, Community Dialogue and Education in the Northern Part of Côte d'Ivoire	Good
	Democratic Republic of Congo	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Regional Office for West and Central Africa (Senegal)	Action Humanitaire Sensible au Genre et Aide aux Femmes et Filles Touchées par le Terrorisme de Boko Haram à Diffa - Niger	Good
East and Southern Africa	Ethiopia	Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	Good
	Kenya	Midterm Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
		Engaging Women in Preventing and Countering Extremist Violence	Good
		Integrating Gender in Peace Support Operations	Good
	Malawi	Gender-based Governance	Good
		Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Regional Office for East and Southern Africa (Kenya)	Regional Evaluation on Capacity Development initiatives during Strategic Note period	Good
	Sudan	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Tanzania	Wanawake-Wanaweza Project on Women Leadership and Political Participation	Satisfactory
	Rwanda	The National Scale Up of the ISANGE One Stop Center Model	Satisfactory
Asia and the Pacific	China	Promote Efforts for National Legislation on Domestic Violence and Upscale the Multi-sector Model in China	Good
	Papua New Guinea	Equality for Progress and Planim Save Kamap Strongpela (Plant Knowledge, Grow Strong)	Good
	Timor Leste	Institutional Strengthening for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	Good
	Vietnam	Strengthening Women's Capacity in Disaster Risk Reduction to Cope with Climate Change	Very Good

Arab States	Afghanistan	Ending Violence Against Women	Good
	Jordan	Promoting Rural Women's Food Security	Very Good
	Regional Office for Arab States (Egypt)	Thematic Evaluation of UN-Women's Humanitarian Action in the Arab States Region	Very Good
		Syrian Women Economic Empowerment Regional Project	Good
	Palestine	One Stop Shop for Sustainable Development Joint Programme	Good
		Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Morocco	Evaluation du Degré d'intégration du Genre dans Les Plans Communaux de Développement	Good
		Projet "Appui aux Femmes Semencières pour un Développement Egalitaire, Solidaire et Durable au Maroc"	Good
	Egypt (Country office)	Securing Rights and Improving Livelihoods of Women Programme	Good
		Thematic Evaluation of UN-Women's Contribution to Women's Leadership and Political Participation	Very Good
Europe and Central Asia	Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (Turkey)	UN-Women's Contribution to Gender- Responsive Budgeting in Europe and Central Asia Region	Very Good
	Kyrgyzstan	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Very Good
	Moldova	Enhancing Women's Political Representation Through Improved Capacity and Enhanced Support	Very Good
	Moldova	Country Portfolio Evaluation	Good
Corporate	IEO	UN-Women Strategic Partnerships on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	Very Good
HQ Divisions	Policy Division	Preventing and Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania, Mexico and Timor Leste	Very Good
		Women's Economic Empowerment and Integration into the Value Chain of the Coca-Cola Company in Brazil, Egypt and South Africa	Good
	Programme Division	Promoting and Protecting Women Migrant Workers' Labour and Human Rights: Engaging with International, National Human Rights Mechanisms to Enhance Accountability	Good

Annex II

Evaluation in funds managed by UN-Women

A. The United Nations Trust Fund

82. The United Nations Trust Fund (UNTF) was established by the General Assembly in 1996 (resolution 50/166) and is administered by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) on behalf of the United Nations system. In 2017, the Trust Fund managed 120 projects aimed at preventing and addressing violence against women and girls in 80 countries and territories.

83. In 2017, twenty-one UN Trust Fund projects implemented by grantees were externally evaluated at a cost of approximately $231,281. Budgets for final external evaluations are built into the grant awarded. Evaluation planning is managed by the grantee organization, with quality assurance and oversight provided by the UNTF. The Fund has one dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist to provide technical support to grantees in preparation and management of their project evaluations. At 91 per cent (21 out of 23 planned evaluations), the UNTF grantees' completion rate for planned evaluation is high. Only two evaluations were not completed as planned due to programmatic issues and political and institutional challenges.

84. In 2017, UNTF tracked and implemented the recommendations of the 2016 independent meta-evaluation and meta-analysis of UNTF project evaluations. This sought to enhance evaluation practice and ensure production of high-quality evaluations that generate evidence on ending violence against women. To safeguard the quality and credibility of evaluative evidence, the UNTF established rigorous processes for reviewing and checking the quality of evaluation terms of reference, inception reports and draft reports, and for increasing the budget for grantee evaluations. Twenty-three good quality project evaluations were summarized for publication on its website under the evidence hub.

85. As in previous years, to enhance the capacities of recently funded grantees in the areas of evidence-based programming and monitoring and evaluation, the UNTF convened a four-day capacity development workshop for 18 participants from nine small non-governmental organizations in New York. The workshop focused on orienting grantees to results-based planning, monitoring and evaluation of their projects. It featured training sessions for participants on how to conduct evaluation design and prepare for project evaluations.

B. Fund for Gender Equality

86. The Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) was launched in 2009. It is UN-Women's leading global grant-making mechanism and multi-donor fund dedicated to women-led civil society organization programming on women's political and economic empowerment. FGE sustains, supports and strengthens the capacities of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). CSOs implement high-impact and multi-stakeholder programmes that translate law and policy commitments into tangible services for women and girls and men and boys around the world, especially in the most excluded and marginalized communities.

87. In 2017, UN-Women's FGE commissioned its first independent evaluation to assess $64 million invested in accelerating the implementation of gender equality commitments through 121 grants to women-led CSOs across 80 countries since 2009.

The evaluation's preliminary findings show that FGE has worked directly with over 535,800 women to increase awareness and visibility of women's human rights, create stronger CSO networks for gender equality and establish local partnerships for women's empowerment. As a result, FGE is viewed by women's civil society as an important and necessary mechanism for advancing gender equality. The preliminary findings also conclude that FGE has delivered multi-dimensional, consistent and robust value-for-money throughout its lifetime. Its collaborative advantage within the United Nations system is to address inequality among CSOs to achieve the "leave no one behind" principle, thus occupying a unique niche in financing for the gender-equality universe. Its comparative advantage has been to address social norms to advance gender equality. The evaluation report will be finalized by April 2018.

88. Evaluation, a stated priority of FGE, is aimed at ensuring institutional accountability, learning and communication of results. A decentralized approach to evaluation has been developed in which grantee partners, under the guidance of FGE's staff, primarily undertake strategic evaluations, using UN-Women and UNEG standards. Only one final grantee programme evaluation was completed in 2017 (Egypt). The rest of FGE's portfolio is still active, with all programmes expected to conclude in 2018–2019.